

WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD

Story and Photo by
SFC Brian Kappmeyer

SFC Robert Teague will tell you the biggest challenge facing the 226th Transportation Company isn't training. It's finding a place to train.

"You can't just go anywhere and pull up track," said Teague, a platoon sergeant and the NCO in charge of one of the projects known here as "Rails to Trails."

The 226th, and the company's Detachment 1 from Joliet, Ill., are working with officials at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Crane, Ind., as part of a test to determine the cost of removing stretches of railroad track near ammunition storage facilities. During the test, more than 6,150 feet of track leading to explosives-storage areas must be removed and replaced by low-maintenance gravel roads.

"The Army supports 'Rails to Trails' because of the high costs associated with repairing and maintaining railroad track — about \$2.1 million annually at Crane," said David Brown, a disaster-preparedness officer and the Reserve coordinator for the center.

The Army decided ammunition that needed to be shipped quickly could be moved more efficiently by trucking it to railheads, Teague said.

Army training isn't the only benefit of the project. "The Reserve relevance is twofold," Brown said. "The Reserve is removing the rail so Navy SeaBees can build the roads to the ammunition-storage facilities."

Crane, located on 63,000 acres in southern Indiana, is planning to remove about 60 miles of rail over a five-year period. The estimated cost of the project is about \$16 million if done by a contractor and about \$4 million if the Army Reserve completes the job. Removing selected areas of rail should also reduce annual maintenance costs by about one-third, said Brown. The Army and Navy jointly maintain the base.

ILT Vanna Brackney, who specializes in railroad accidents and equipment failures, so enjoys her role in the Reserve that she travels from her home in Grand Prairie, Texas, to drill with the 226th in Granite City, Ill. Before that, she traveled to Milwaukee, Wis., to drill with the 757th Trans. Bn., the 226th's higher headquarters.

Brackney said the 757th emphasizes crosstraining its soldiers in each of the three railroad-related specialties: track maintenance, train crewman and railway-equipment repair. □

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